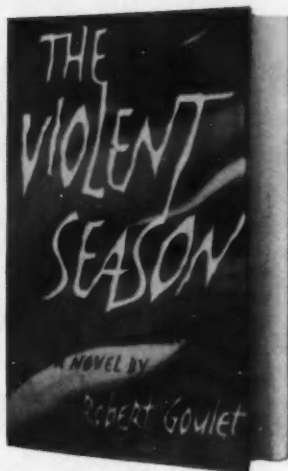


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The Canadian Reader

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THE VIOLENT SEASON by Robert Goulet reviewed by Arnold
Edinborough page 2 **JUSTICE THROUGH POWER** by
Thomas Boyle reviewed by Robert Weaver page 4
VIEWS page 6 **AND REVIEWS, A Man Possessed,**
Wonders of the Arctic, The Selected Writings of William
Lyon Mackenzie page 7 **TWO U.S. COMMENTS ON**
THE VIOLENT SEASON page 8 **MOSSWORD NUMBER**
ONE page 9 **PAST SELECTIONS** page 10

READERS' CLUB SELECTION:

THE VIOLENT SEASON

by Robert Goulet

reviewed by Arnold Edinborough

The Violent Season is well named. This novel by Robert Goulet (nothing to do with the *Camelot* Robert Goulet) contains two or three murders (one by stoning, two by burning), several fights between loggers and enough sexuality to make even the readers of *Peyton Place* blench.

Why then choose it for the Readers' Club? First of all because it is a good novel. It has a story which keeps you reading from the first page to the last and is crammed full of incident. It also has skillful characterization so that even the most monstrous characters in it (the brothel keeper, the priest and the president of what in English Canada would be the Altar Guild) are believable.

As well as being a good novel, it is also of great interest to anyone concerned with the present ferment in Quebec. *The Violent Season*, together with *Mad Shadows* by Marie-Claire Blais and *Les Insolences de Frere Untel* show a literary movement running against the grain of the church. The heavy hand of French Canadian Catholicism is now being challenged right in the Province itself. *Frere Untel* does it humorously, both Marie-Claire Blais and Goulet do it violently.

The story of *The Violent Season* is simple. It takes place in a Northern Quebec community where the loggers from the woods pause for a day or so before returning to their homes in Three Rivers or the farms along the St. Lawrence. Because they have been starved of the "amenities" of civilization whilst in the bush, they hit the community with a bang. They want a drink and they want a woman.

A scheming Montrealer therefore imports a group of prostitutes, sets them up in a building owned by an Order of Nuns, with the connivance of the parish priest. Says Goulet: "Such behaviour in a country priest might appear incredible. But even more fantastic was the fact that he had acted in absolute good faith. He honestly believed that a house of sin would help cut down the number of illegitimate children. In his scale of values the welfare of his flock rated above the strict letter of the Catechism. Between a few dozen mortal sins, committed, besides, by out-of-town loggers, and a few dozen illegitimate babies to be cared for at the Trois-Rivières foundling home out of the parish funds, the choice was clear; he must decide in favour of that which cost less in the long run. Moreover, the money thus saved indirectly would, in turn, be put at the service of the parish, a society of The Virgins of Mary. He had hoped that such a society, in conjunction with the house of sin, might finally put an end to the goings-on in the

ravine. With factory girls at meetings of the Virgins of Mary, and the transient loggers left to their filthy business inside the house of sin, one could certainly expect results beneficial to the entire community."

The fact is, though, that the women of the town rather liked the annual jaunts to the ravine and decide to ride the prostitutes out of town. They are stimulated in this by a Jesuit Brother who is nursing a sickly aspirant to the priesthood through consumption to death and canonization as the Little Saint of the Timberland. After all, travellers have St. Christopher, he thinks, why shouldn't loggers have St. Claude.

The drumming out of town—the Charivari—is arranged on the night that Claude dies. But the strongest members of the church prove delinquent human beings and the man who has been trained for sainthood takes his pleasure with one of the prostitutes just before he is due to die. In the end the Charivari does take place, and the remains which are found and are interred with reverence as those of Claude actually belong to an idealistic young Jew who gets mixed up in the whole business purely by chance.

I think that this inadequate summary of the plot will show that Mr. Goulet has a good deal on his mind and is getting it off in about as violent and shocking a fashion as he can devise.

The violence is not the be-all and end-all, however, of this book. Goulet knows his locale well and the descriptions of the area and of the people in it are very good. His hatred of the system in these villages doesn't obscure his love either for the countryside or for humanity generally.

My impression is that this novel will be something of a sleeper. Twenty years from now it will be regarded as one of the really significant novels to come out of Quebec at a time when the old order was beginning to change radically.

As Robert Graves says in a letter to the publisher, "Robert Goulet's obsessive hatred of the French-Canadian small-town atmosphere in which he was raised explodes here in a terrible blast. The sincerity is incontrovertible, the horrid details convincing—though I had hitherto thought this more typical of Protestant pietistic perversion than of Catholic. That English is obviously not his native tongue gives *The Violent Season* a distinct and persuasive flavor. Here is someone trying to get something important off his chest—to me the only valid excuse for a modern novel. There are no irrelevant patches in the story."

I agree with Graves, and so do the Readers' Club Selection Committee.

THE VIOLENT SEASON is published by S. J. Reginald Saunders & Co. Ltd. It has 383 pages. **The Violent Season** is published at \$4.50. Readers' Club members' price is \$3.60.

AN ALTERNATE SELECTION:

JUSTICE THROUGH POWER

by Thomas Boyle

Reviewed by Robert Weaver

Thomas Boyle's *Justice Through Power* is an odd bird of a book. It kept me wondering how much Mr. Boyle speaks only for himself and to what extent he reflects the attitudes of trade union members in English Canada. Probably just because he is so paradoxical and inconsistent, Mr. Boyle represents the attitudes of the rank and file in the unions pretty well. He is a most reluctant radical.

This is a book about trade unionism that wasn't written by a bureaucrat or a university professor. Mr. Boyle has been concerned with adult education for much of his life, and he is plainly an intellectual among the workers. But for ten years until 1959 he worked on the assembly line at Smith-Corona in Toronto, and he began to write *Justice Through Power* when he became a victim of the worker's occupational disease: he was laid off.

The first half of the book is about the unions as an economic force in our society. In eight chapters Mr. Boyle discusses union democracy, strikes, wages, organization of the unorganized, and other traditional concerns of Labour. There are some fragmentary glimpses of the workers themselves, but there is less material of this kind in *Justice Through Power* than I would have liked to see. The second half of the book enters darker waters. Mr. Boyle asks whether Canada is a class society, and answers his own question by describing six classes in our society: the *bourgeoisie*, the civil servants, the professionals, the farmers, the intellectuals, and the workers. (I'm convinced, too, that we have a class society in this country; but I'm not convinced that Mr. Boyle's six classes make sense, or that he has defined them clearly and logically.) He then discusses who rules Canada, and what role the six classes play in the struggle for political and economic power. He ends his book with an analysis of the prospects of the New Party.

A good way to give an impression of *Justice Through Power* may be to quote a few of Thomas Boyle's opinions about politics and the unions.

Item He says that the record of the unions is vulnerable "in the matter of discrimination based on sex and nationality differences". They don't really care that women are paid less than men, and they have been slow to recognize the danger to their own members of the exploitation of New Canadians.

Item "Workers are getting into the habit of talking of *the* union instead of *our* union." Why? Mr. Boyle never really comes to grips with this problem

that may be crucial to trade unionism in Europe and North America in the second half of the twentieth century.

Item "I do not want the socialists in power in Canada . . . and I vote against them. I am, or would be if I were asked, willing that my financial contribution should help keep them a going concern." And later: "The Welfare State is a threat to freedom . . . I hate our growing Welfare State because it will give full play to the very clever people who would reform and remake us".

There are many other opinions in *Justice Through Power* as cranky and independent as those I've just quoted, yet in all fundamental respects Thomas Boyle is a good, even conventional, union man. He defends the trade union movement vigorously against its critics. He says that the unions are democratic, that they are not dominated by thugs or bureaucrats, and that the strike is a necessary weapon used almost always with reluctance by union leaders. Despite the remarks I've quoted on Socialism and the Welfare State, he says that the New Party is a good thing.

Some of the paradoxes in *Justice Through Power* reflect an intelligence that is plainly divided against itself. Mr. Boyle's style is old-fashioned and sometimes awkward because in large part he belongs as a writer and thinker to another age. Yet he has read the postwar American sociologists, and he recognizes that the fabric of our society is changing, and that the place in society of the unions is bound to change as well. There were times when I thought that Mr. Boyle might have made himself into a kind of Canadian Eric Hoffer, but the personal radicalism which that longshoreman/philosopher achieved in *The True Believer* remains fragmentary and muffled in *Justice Through Power*.

Mr. Boyle reflects almost too well the Tory radicalism of the trade unionists in Canada. His book is full of paradoxes as paradox is built into the trade unions and their members in this country. *Justice Through Power* is a more significant document for the New Party to study than any book its leaders seem likely to publish. It makes the inflexible radicalism of a Kenneth McNaught seem not only out of date but a dangerous indulgence for the New Party even to consider. It destroys some of the most romantic myths of the labour movement. It describes the trade unions as at once less powerful and more significant than their critics are willing to admit. Mr. Boyle's opinions and conclusions are certainly open to argument, but I suspect that, often through indirection, he has told as much of the truth as anyone about the trade union movement in this country.

JUSTICE THROUGH POWER is published by Longmans, Green and Company. It has 248 pages. *Justice Through Power* is published at \$4.50. Readers' Club members' price is \$3.60.

VIEWS:

A **Historical Atlas of Canada**, offered to Club members in April, turned out to be the most popular Selection the Club has ever had. This, naturally, pleased both ourselves and Thomas Nelson & Sons, the publishers of this outstanding book. However, the popularity of the atlas also produced a problem. When we had exhausted our own supply and the publisher's supply as well, we still were several hundred copies short of the quantity needed to fill members' orders. The publisher had extra copies on hand, but they were not bound. As soon as the shortage developed the extra copies were rushed to the bindery. Even at that, though, it turned out to be impossible to fill all of the outstanding orders during April. Some members were still receiving their atlases in the second half of May. We hope they will take consolation in the fact that this remarkable book was well worth waiting for.

* * *

During **Library Week** in April, New Yorkers got the best chance they have probably ever had to look at Canadian books. A prominent display window of Fifth Avenue was filled with a representative selection of the works of Canadian writers. Also included in the display were a Governor General's Medal and a Leacock Medal, lent in the cause by their winners.

* * *

It was a black day in Vancouver for bibliophiles when the **Vancouver Sun** dropped its book review page. Bill Duthie, of Duthie Books, is reported to have marked the calamity by putting a hand-lettered sign in his shop window to the effect that, although the **Sun** was no longer reviewing books, Duthie was still selling them.

* * *

The seventh annual **Festival Exhibition of Books** opens at the Stratford Festival on June 19th and will be running until mid-September. This year about twelve hundred books will be on display, enticingly laid out for the pleasure of browsers. There will be a major exhibition at the Festival this year of the arts of French Canada and this theme will be carried

through in the Exhibition of Books with a large selection of books from French Canada. Kay Mathers, who organizes the display for the Publishers' Association, warns visitors of one hazard; last year a man neglected to put on his brakes when he parked in front of the exhibition hall. As he entered the book exhibit, his car rolled down a gentle slope and slid smoothly among the swans in the Avon River. If you are in Stratford this summer, don't neglect either the books or your brakes.

* * *

Also at Stratford this summer is the second go-round for the Stratford Seminars on Shakespeare sponsored by the universities of Canada (twenty-eight of them). This year there will be two Seminars, the first August 14-19 and the second August 21-26. Seminararians will see the Festival plays, hear lectures from scholars, critics and directors and have opportunity for formal and informal discussion. Seminar meetings will be held in the Festival theatre itself. Staff for the Seminars includes such well-known names as Northrop Frye, Michael Langham, Arnold Edinborough, George McCowan, Alfred Harbage and Mavor Moore among others. The fee for each Seminar is \$100 all-inclusive or \$75 for everything but bed and breakfast. Particulars and an application form may be obtained from Peter D. Smith, Department of Extension, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

* * *

Canadian Scene was the recipient last month of the Canadian Citizenship Council's annual Citizenship Award. The award, a hand-illuminated beaver pelt, coincided with **Canadian Scene's** completion of ten years of service. **Canadian Scene** provides material free of charge every week to some seventy-three foreign-language publications in Canada. The purpose of this service is "to supply democratic foreign-language publications with information in their own languages, which will give their readers a true picture of Canadian life, politics, culture and institutions and thus assist them to become useful citizens." In 1960, **Canadian**

Scene articles were reprinted 2,706 times and the photographs supplied were used some 1,783 times. **Canadian Scene** checks on the appropriateness and usefulness of the material it provides by consulting regularly with the editors of the ethnic press. Margaret K. Zieman, **Canadian Scene's** editor, is backed up by voluntary officers and advisors who lend their time and talents to the project. The whole service, which plays so large a role in interpreting Canada to our two million newcomers, is operated on a budget of less than \$25,000 a year, all of it provided through donations. **Canadian Scene** fully

deserves its award from the Citizenship Council and, indeed, deserves even wider recognition from the Canadian community at large.

* * *

Dale C. Thomson, assistant professor of political science at the University of Montreal, was awarded the Toronto Women's Canadian Club 1960 literary award recently for his biography of Alexander Mackenzie. **Alexander Mackenzie: Clear Grit** was the Readers' Club Selection in March. This excellent biography is still available to Club members.

AND REVIEWS

A Man Possessed by Sidney Bigman (British Book Service, \$3.75) is the story of Charles-Henri Laplante, a sometime poet from a solid French-Canadian home, who is driven to rape, violence, pederasty, atheism, incest, alcoholism, sadism, masochism and, of course, poetry. Whenever Charles-Henri becomes bored with breaking rocks for his father he goes on a spree to Quebec City, spitting often, drinking as much as possible, and cutting himself with random pieces of broken glass. He and his city friends are driven to sensuality and violence by forces they can neither control nor understand. Within about ten seconds on one such trip to the city, Charles-Henri meets and falls deeply in love with a pure, simple, decent, religious girl named Denise who is apparently driven by no forces but her instantaneous love for the hero. At this point the problem of the book becomes clear: should Charles-Henri, who, driven by forces etc. . . hurts whatever he loves, marry Denise and hurt her?

Sidney Bigman presents, in isolated sections towards the end of the novel, a moving commentary on these remarkable people and on the hero's **crise de conscience**. But at no time does he throw any light on the mysterious forces which direct the action. Consequently, the characterization is shallow, the characters remain vague and undefined and their actions are the unrelated, unmotivated actions of fairy-tale people who can be forgotten when the book is finished.

A Man Possessed seems hurriedly con-

ceived. The style, while clear and occasionally beautiful, too often descends to undisciplined glibness. However, the novel's faults are interesting; they are those of a book which was meant to be good, but didn't quite turn out. Kafka gives us dream-people who are not merely book-people. O'Neill gives us people tortured by forces they do not understand, but which we understand. Sidney Bigman doesn't quite achieve either of these artistic goals.

W. F. SMYTH

* * *

Wonders of the Arctic (Dodd, Mead & Co. \$3.25) is the sixteenth in the excellent "Wonders" series and the sixth by Jacqueline Berrill.

Mrs. Berrill, wife of N. J. Berrill, the McGill zoologist and writer, has spent much of her life in the north and her book is evidence of a trained, observant eye. She writes clear, concise prose which respects the intelligence of young readers and details the fascinating life at the top of the world.

Her book opens with a description of the bare Arctic land, continues through ten chapters to fill this land with life, and closes with an outline of the history of Arctic exploration. From the first appearance of the strange, bright Arctic plants which form a mossy carpet with their half-exposed, wide-spreading roots, the author presents a spellbinding picture of a burgeoning land; caribou in early spring wandering in herds to protect themselves from the Arctic fox and the

Eskimo who lie in wait for them; musk-oxen, prehistoric leftovers with long, matted hair, moving along their well-established trails; birds, almost songless and generally somber-hued, arriving by thousands when the insects are thick in the summer sky.

The High Arctic in its brief flash of summer teems with life and activity, but even when the sun begins to set for the winter life goes on. The young seal with its thick baby fur stays through the long dark months as does his enemy, the Polar bear. The great fierce snowy owl lives forever in the cold and hunts the Arctic hare and the tiny lemming which, as a result of being nearsighted, often stumbles into the sea. Life in this cruel corner of the Earth has its own cycle and Jacqueline Berrill has skillfully portrayed it, not only in words, but with delightful pen drawings.

Wonders of the Arctic is a fine example of the sort of book frustrated parents are buying for their children to try to compensate for the fuzzy way knowledge is presented in school texts.

JANET LUNN

* * *

Of all the Scotsmen who did so much to form Canada's social and political character, William Lyon Mackenzie is undoubtedly the most vivid. For a long

time he was probably also the most misrepresented. The school books dealt with Mackenzie and the Family Compact in comic opera terms and C. W. Jeffrie's drawings, usually so helpful, unfortunately perpetuated the distortions in our image of an interesting and important man. A few years ago William Kilbourn's **The Firebrand** did much to amend the superficiality of our view of the Upper Canadian rebel. Now, with the publication of **The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie** (Oxford, \$6.50) we have another chance to correct our understanding of this man.

Margaret Fairley, the editor of this collection, has selected with sympathy and care and has provided explanatory notes which illuminate without intruding. Against this background, Mackenzie emerges through his own words as a passionate democrat, a man of universal interests, a gifted journalist and an immense respecter of facts. To the fiery political crusader is added an appealing picture of the enquiring reporter whose curiosity and perceptivity lead him to create a vivid, living picture of life as it was lived in Upper Canada in the second quarter of the last century. This is a highly informative and thoroughly satisfying book.

PETER MARTIN

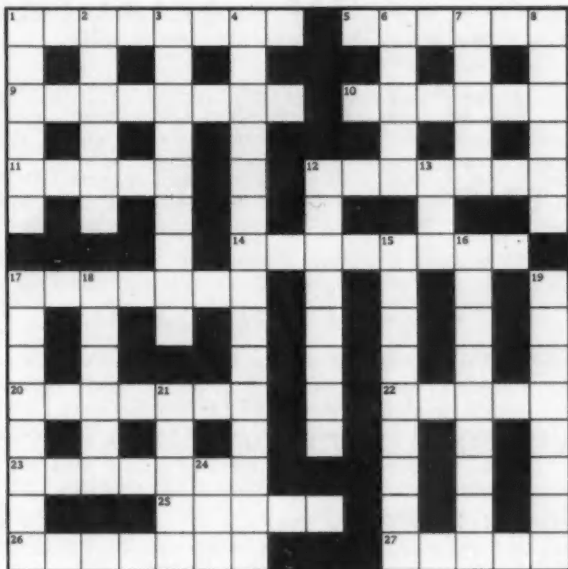
TWO U.S. COMMENTS ON THE VIOLENT SEASON :

... such is the angry strength of the writing, such is the author's power to seduce us into a willing acceptance of his situation, that we believe the enormities of these primitive, mean-spirited people. In the end, we are forced into genuine involvement. David Watmough in the **New York Times**.

... the book is a wildly purple Grand Guignol piece, a blood-curdling melodrama carried to the edge of absurdity, transparently rigged to reach its all-out climax of vast fires consuming the villains of the piece, the inmates of the brothel, an innocent bystander, and even the supposed local saint — in himself a rather touching figure. Edmund Fuller in the **Herald Tribune**.

MOSSWORD NUMBER ONE

by
SYLVIA MOSS



ACROSS

1. Braid tie untangled for invective (8)
5. Learn incomplete direction to find a Canadian novelist (6)
9. Division has Orient hidden in feline (Bloody!) (8)
10. Making request like a Monarch? (6)
11. The Raven indicated when it would happen again (5)
12. Gull follows the end of French vivacity to a source of light (7)
14. This Roman ruler would change a right ratchet (8)
17. English street begins German street (7)
20. Military Japanese, though not comic, could be as Raimu (7)
22. Sam, you made the pants too long! (5)
23. Rifle or cocktail? (7)
25. Chanted about a stone parapet (5)
26. Laid for a rainy day? (7)
27. John, Peter & Paul — reported in Tass? (5)

DOWN

1. Edward upward embraces ability to pour off (6)
2. Hero of Camelot? (6)
3. Without the end of children to decorate again would be gaudy (9)
4. Weather indication in Canadian novel? (9, 6)
6. Valentine and ——— (or Wells) (5)
7. One is making a row (5)
8. Ruler sounds as though he concerns a nice guy (6)
12. Leacock's lapses? (8)
13. Two of this seaman would be equal to a savage (3)
15. Cold Canadian place contains a warm occupation (9)
16. Rangy Clem in confusion becomes a wearer of the cloth (9)
17. Simon sat upside down for a Greek verse (8)
18. Ibsen hero? (6)
19. Stone roller sounds at first as though he wouldn't dare. (8)
21. Is in sun god and east, set higher (5)
24. Horse or wife? (3)

CONTEST: The authors of each of the first three correct solutions received for Mossword Number One will be awarded a copy of B. K. Sandwell's **Diversions of Dukesstown**. Send solutions to Mosswords, c/o Readers' Club, Box 507, Station F, Toronto 5, Ontario, before June 10, 1961.

PAST SELECTIONS

Past Selections of the Readers' Club remain available to Club members at special members' Prices. Members may order any of these books in place of or in addition to this month's Selection or Alternate.

The Club will also supply members with any other book in print at regular retail prices—no charge for postage.

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